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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1392
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3440
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2826
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000521

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: ELECTION OBSERVERS SUBJECT OF OSCE
ROUNDTABLE

REF: A. BISHKEK 331

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 195

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: At a May 27 OSCE-hosted roundtable with the Central Election Commission (CEC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), diplomatic corps, and NGO community representatives, OSCE Ambassador Tesoriere and CEC Chairman Lisovsky reviewed recent developments regarding the July 23 Presidential election. Tesoriere disclosed receipt of the Kyrgyz government's invitation of 150 ODIHR and 150 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observers for the July 23 election, an invitation that fell short of the 300 observers ODIHR had requested. An MFA representative pledged to continue work with ODIHR on election preparations, while Lisovsky reiterated a commitment to open and transparent elections "in accordance with the democratic legislation in place and in compliance with international standards." On May 29, in response to the Ambassador's offer of assistance, Tesoriere's deputy responded that he was optimistic that OSCE/ODIHR could "massage" the observer issue with Kyrgyz authorities to the satisfaction of ODIHR's needs. End Summary.

OSCE PRESSES FOR FAIR ELECTIONS

[1](#)2. (SBU) At the opening of a May 27 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) roundtable with the Kyrgyz Central Election Commission (CEC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), foreign diplomatic missions, and non-government organization representatives, Ambassador Andrew Tesoriere, head of the OSCE Center in Bishkek, highlighted several necessary components for a free and fair Presidential election on July 23. He emphasized voter education, sufficient numbers of election observers, free access for candidates to the media, and preventing the misuse of government resources.

CEC CHAIR HIGHLIGHTS ELECTION PREPARATIONS

13. (SBU) CEC Chairman Damir Lisovsky discussed election preparations, to include candidate registration and public awareness campaigns. Lisovsky stressed a previous pledge to ensure open and transparent elections "in accordance with the democratic legislation in place and in compliance with international standards." One of Lisovsky's staffers brought with him for reference a large volume titled, in Russian, "International Election Standards."

14. (SBU) Lisovsky announced that there would be 56 election commissions outside of Bishkek and Osh, but said that the final number of polling stations would not be known until June 1, when the electorate list should be completed. A Foreign Ministry official added that there would be 47 polling stations outside of the country for expatriate Kyrgyz citizens. CEC representatives distributed observer application forms and handbooks detailing election codes and regulations. Lisovsky maintained that the CEC continued to consult with resident diplomats, political parties, and non-governmental organizations to ensure openness and transparency for the election. He said that of the 22 original candidates, five suspended their candidacy and three were rejected for non-compliance with established regulations. Fourteen candidates remain.

LANGUAGE AND SIGNATURES

15. (SBU) Lisovsky reviewed the status of Kyrgyz language tests of the candidates, and noted that candidates must

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submit a minimum of 50,000 signatures of supporters, along with other required documents, by June 2. (Note: Language exams are scheduled to be completed by June 5. Incumbent President Kurmanbek Bakiyev, opposition United People's Movement candidate Almaz Atambayev and opposition Ak Shumkar chief Temir Sariyev all have passed the exam. End Note.) He said that, if submitted documents met requirements, candidates would be officially registered by June 17. When Kyrgyz Alliance of Civic Organizations (ACO) representative Dinara Ashurahunova asked how signatures would be verified, Lisovsky said that handwriting experts have trained regional and local election commission staff in handwriting analysis. He offered the same training to interested NGO representatives.

ON THE QUESTION OF OBSERVERS

16. (SBU) Lisovsky announced that election observers would be allowed according to international standards to "ensure transparency." Downplaying the need for a large number of foreign observers, he claimed that "of the 359 international observers deployed during the 2005 elections, 214 were citizens of Kyrgyzstan." Tesoriere's deputy, Lillian Darii, disputed Lisovsky's declaration, noting that "299 international observers were citizens of other OSCE member countries," and asked for the source of Lisovsky's data. Another CEC representative interjected, permitting Lisovsky to ignore answering Darii's question directly, to state that Kyrgyz legislation dictated control of the numbers and make-up of election observers.

17. (SBU) At this point, Tesoriere finally announced that the Kyrgyz government had earlier that day officially invited 150 ODIHR and 150 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly observers. Darii then asked the CEC if Kyrgyzstan's OSCE commitments had been considered in crafting Kyrgyzstan's election observation laws. The MFA official responded that Kyrgyz law empowered the President, Parliament and the CEC to invite observers, but assured the roundtable participants that Kyrgyz legislation does not specify numbers and duration and that

the Kyrgyz government would work with the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and other organizations.

¶18. (C) Ambassador Tesoriere concluded that the invitation would be considered in Vienna and Warsaw, and that the OSCE would respond through normal channels between the ODIHR chairman and the Kyrgyz government. (Note: Our Ambassador met with Darii May 29 and offered U.S. assistance on the observer issue. Darii believed that a compromise with the Kyrgyz could be reached with possibly 280 short-term ODIHR observers and 20 Parliamentary Assembly observers. Even with his boss, Tesoriere, currently in Vienna, Darii seemed confident that the issue could be "massaged" to everyone's satisfaction. End Note.)

A DEBATE ABOUT DEBATES

¶19. (SBU) Scott Kearin of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) pressed the CEC on his request to fund televised debates among the Presidential candidates. Lisovsky and his staff refuted Kearin's claims that the debates were for voter education purposes, the only permissible exception to restrictions on foreign funds in the election. Kearin argued that the debates would educate the population on each candidate's platform while the CEC asserted that they would allow candidates to promote themselves.

¶10. (C) The squabble ended with the CEC warning everyone that Kyrgyz legislation prevents the use of foreign funding for election campaigns. Lisovsky offered to work with NDI

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and other international NGOs to direct funding towards the development of projects in support of the electoral process and in line with Kyrgyz legislation. In response to German Ambassador Holger Green's question about CEC-funded debates, Lisovsky stated that the televised Kyrgyz language exams exposed the public to the candidates and their platforms. Another CEC representative added that the CEC would arrange televised debates.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) Lisovsky's remarks cast additional light on Kyrgyz preparations for the July 23 election, especially as the May 28 OSCE Permanent Council statements illustrated Kyrgyzstan's advanced preparations to address concerns about the 150/150 observer cap. Prior to the roundtable, Tesoriere told the DCM that he preferred not to engage in a heated debate about the invitation in that venue and hoped for guidance from Vienna to engage the Kyrgyz MFA and CEC privately. Darii's May 29 comments to the Ambassador indicate that the OSCE mission here is hopeful that an acceptable arrangement might be reached with the Kyrgyz government over the observer mission.
GFOELLER